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UAPI conference examines changing threat landscape

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UAPI conference examines changing threat landscape

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Just like homeland security itself, educators in the field see a constant stream of threats and must decide which essential issues require future learning and which are temporary and passing.

“That is one of the hardest things to contend with; the field is so dynamic it’s challenging to stay abreast of current curriculum,” said UAPI Co-Director Stan Supinski. “That’s the great thing about this conference. This is great place for people to get updated so that can modify courses to meet current needs and trends.”

The 9th annual Homeland Defense and Security Education Summit on September 25-26, hosted by the [Center for Homeland Defense and Security University and Agency Partnership Initiative](#), [Valencia College](#) and FEMA/DHS addressed that conundrum with the theme “Evolving Homeland Security to meet Future Threats/Hazards.”

“The annual UAPI conference is critical to ensuring that CHDS share its homeland security educational experiences and resources with other institutions and learn from their efforts as well,” CHDS Director Glen Woodbury said. “This community of interest of academics, practitioners and officials continue to advance a long term effort towards a safer and secure nation.”

Post-conference surveys show the gathering succeeds at doing just that as seven in 10 respondents said they plan to modify their curriculum based on presentations.

A constant theme in the history of homeland security education has, of course, been terrorism. John Tien, former Senior Director for Afghanistan and Pakistan with the President’s National Security Council provided an inside glimpse of the Obama administration’s policy in those two nations.

Conversely, the still-emerging issue of unmanned aerial systems was among the newer topics discussed. David Morton, former Federal Aviation Administration Safety Inspector, discussed drones as a resource for public safety and the threat they can pose.

In addition to emerging issues, the conference addressed the mechanizations of teaching the subject with sessions such as “The Human Aspect of Homeland Security Education” and “Beyond the Discussion Board: Integrating Interactive Online Delivery Methods.”

As with past events, the workshop took advantage of the expertise of CHDS alumni. Recent master’s degree graduate Ryan Fields-Spack of the Aurora Colorado Office of Emergency Management delivered a presentation based on his CHDS thesis, [“Airmanship on the Ground: How the Aviation Industry can Fundamentally Change the way First Responders Manage Complex Emergencies,”](#) while 2010 alumnus John Comiskey, who teaches at Monmouth University, presented “The Graphic Novel: A Cool Format for Teaching Homeland Security to Generation Y.”

Beyond teaching and issues discussions, the conference provides a beneficial opportunity for networking with like-minded educators. Some 93 percent of those surveyed said the event was a valuable networking tool.

“Our community is an altruistic community that continues to help each other,” Supinski said. “Even if we compete in enrollment, when it comes to education we still work together and freely share materials.”

Next year will mark a decade of holding the annual conference and CHDS/UAPI will partner with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, and George Mason University, with the event to be held in the Washington D.C. area.

“We’ve been doing this for 10 years and the interest continues growing,” Supinski said.

